

MTM/VF EIS

Community Narrative: Blair, West Virginia

Interviewer: Um tell me a little bit about how you and your wife and your family came to live in the Blair area.

Resident: I was born here.

Interviewer: You were born here...

Resident: Yeah.

Interviewer: So your family lives here, and...

Resident: Right, my dad brought this, he just owned just about all this holler, in 1935.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Resident: And uh I was born about a mile up the other holler over here and we moved here when I was about 6 months old. I lived here ever since.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Resident: She lived over in Man, and I met her and brought her over here.

Interviewer: Uh huh, uh huh... What would you say growing up here and in the time you lived here before the surface mining came in, what was it about this community that you liked, that you enjoyed?

Resident: Well, the people. We had, we had a pretty nice people. We had a few outlaws too, but ah the majority of the people were nice people. It's a nice community, and a lot of them just moved away. And a lot of them sorry that they moved, after they moved, but once you sell out, you can't get back.

Interviewer: So the people who were in the community, what's one of the best things for you?

Resident: Yeah, it's a quiet community, you know, we don't have.... very little ah problems. We have a few, but it's a nice place to live.

Interviewer: Uh huh. And where did a where did you work for example?

Resident: I worked for Sharples Coal.

Interviewer: Doing underground mining or surface mining or...?

Resident: Well, I worked inside for about two years and the rest of it was outside on the tipple - preparation plant.

Interviewer: Uh huh. So were you working for the company that was close by?

Resident: Yeah, they the ones that mountaintopped... they wasn't mountain topping when I was there, but maybe they stripped. But they didn't mountaintop.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Resident: Most of it was deep mining.

Interviewer: Uh huh. And that was really the only job you've had, you've always worked for them?

Resident: No, I worked old Logan. I worked a 13 years over there and I worked for ah... started out at a car lot. I washed cars for a living.... Worked for a wholesale house, sold groceries, wholesale groceries. And I worked for another wholesale house after that, and then I worked for loading concrete. I sold concrete cinderblocks, and then I got a job at the mine. And I finished there. I had 27 years.

Interviewer: Uh huh. So about when did you start working for the mining company?

Resident: Uh 1968.

Interviewer: In '68?

Resident: Yeah.

Interviewer: And why did you, what what prompted you to take that job? Was it you were looking for a new one you wanted a different one?

Resident: Money.

Interviewer: Money.

Resident: They paid the best wages.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Resident II: Tell them what you were making before.

Resident: I was making \$2 an hour when I went to a Sharples Coal. And I went down there I was making a probably about \$4 an hour, and then they went up. When I quit I was making over about \$116 a day.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Resident: Save matters a quarter. But ah these place I worked, I know Logan, they didn't pay much. You just survived, that's about all you could say.

Interviewer: So, when did the surface mining start in Blair?

Resident: Ahh... probably about '95 somewhere around '95. I quit work in '94 and they was just getting started then. But they didn't get up to Blair 'til probably about '95-'96.

Interviewer: Uh huh. So, you never worked for this company while they were mining right here? Mountaintop mining?

Resident: No. Not mountaintopping. It was Ashland Coal when I worked for 'em. They sold out to Arch Mineral. I guess that's who owns 'em now is Arch.

Interviewer: Did you notice... Did you notice any changes in the community when the surface mining came in?

Resident: Oh sure.

Interviewer: Can you describe some of those to me?

Resident: Well, are you talking 'bout the environmentalist or just the people leaving or what?

Interviewer: Any of the changes you want to talk about.

Resident: They got to buy out your neighbors, you know, they'd had to move and ah...

Interviewer: The population left...

Resident: Yeah, and they would think they would be getting a good price for their houses, because when then brought their houses they didn't pay a whole lot for it. But when they go try to buy one somewhere else, they usually have to go in debt, most of them.

Resident II: They had have lived here for years.

Resident: Yeah,

Resident II: And they didn't realize what the company was giving them wasn't worth what they needed to...

Resident: A lot of them was just like me, they were born and raised here. And then you talk about the environment - we had put up with dust. When they put off a shot, they'd be up back the holler up here, and dust would roll down this holler. And ah, we haven't had a flood since they done all this. Back when they stripped back in the early '70s, they stripped around to the head of this holler

and we had floods back then. And it would rain, and you'd be sittin on the front porch and you can hear that water coming down the holler. It would all come down at one time. And we hadn't had any of that, no floods, since they've done this mountaintop. And I don't know what's gonna happen. And it worries me, but a I don't dwell on it a whole lot. But I don't know what's gonna happen

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Resident: But ah, we ah, I called ah the Environmental Protection Agency one time about the dust come down the holler. And my brother had just washed his truck and it was sitting down here in the driveway. And he had a black Ford truck. And they came over here and he actually wiped dust of my brother's truck. Um, he wrote me a letter after he filled out his report and said there wasn't enough evidence to prove that ah they had broke the law. But they was one of the men riding over in a helicopter when that happened, and he seen it and he made 'em file for it. And that goes to tell you something that some of these people are being bought off. Because you know good and well you can't wipe dust of a man's vehicle - something's wrong. And another thing, they ruined our well water. I use to have a water softener on it and it took care of the rust. And it got to where it didn't take care of it, but now our water stinks, it smells. It's sulfur water, I guess, what it is and we don't use it other than to just flush the commode or take a bath. We don't bath in it unless we have to. And I go way up the holler to get water which comes out of the mountain to drink and to cook with, but they ruin our well water.

Interviewer: So, you said your brother filed a complaint about the dust?

Resident: I'm the one filed the complaint.

Interviewer: You filed the complaint?

Resident: My brother's truck was setting out there and he, and they wiped the dust off his truck.

Interviewer: Did you ever talk to them about any of the other things, such as the water?

Resident: Oh yeah, yeah we talked to them about it, but...

Resident II: They came up here and said to clean the well...

Resident: They wanted me to clean my well out. Said clean your well out, that's what they told me. I took, I took three samples to a meeting we had down at the school about our water. I took one over the weekend you know when they wasn't doing no blasting, and it looked fairly good. And I took one after they started blasting, and I showed it to 'em. And they didn't think what I was showing them was actual truth. They made fun of me, really, and I got it right of my spigot.

Interviewer II: And you reported that to the state department?

Resident: Oh yeah, we had a meeting down at the school, use to have environmental meeting down there. And when we first had that meeting, I asked the man, that was environmentalist man, I asked him, "What is it that you all protect?" They said, "Well, we protect against the water, protect against

the air, and we protect the community.” And when we got through everybody start questioning him, come to find out they was protecting nothing, he wasn’t. He said that would be under another department. They put it off on somebody else on every case.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Resident: And we didn’t get a thing out of it, what we was trying to get done.

Female Interviewer: So, you never got any response about your water?

Resident: Oh no. Another man came here a while back, oh it’s been...

Resident II: That’s about... I think, last part of last summer.

Resident: It wouldn’t be that long.

Resident II: Yes it has.

Resident: Well, he come here and he got like he was going to put us a water system in here. And ah, I was glad when he told us. I said I’ll believe it when I see it. But ah, we never heard anything about that.

Resident II: It goes on 24 hours a day.

Resident: Yeah, you hear things a clanging and banging back in here ah... they’d let off shots, most of those were early in the morning or late in the evening, the shots were. They’d rattle your house, your windows would shake, your pictures rattled.

Interviewer: Was there any warning, for the shots?

Resident: Well, we couldn’t hear ‘em. They’d put off warnings back there on the hill, but we couldn’t hear them down here.

Resident II: There were three, three horn blasts before...

Resident: Did you even hear one?

Resident II: Before the shots go off.

Resident: No, they send us letters, you know.

Resident II: We’re so far away, that when the horn blasts... It’s hard to hear, but when the dynamite blew you could hear that.

Resident: See, they got a dam up the holler, a run-off pond is what it’s called, and I don’t know what’s gonna ever happen to that. They told, the environmentalist told me that when they quit

they'd tear that dam out, but they ain't tore it out. It's still up there. They came down the other day, and that boy lives up the holler here said they came down and cleaned it out. That's the first time I know of them to clean it out.

Female Interviewer: Now you think that was the state or that was someone from the mining company?

Resident: That was the mining company cleaned it.

Female Interviewer: Did the mining company ever talk to you, like come around and discuss with you what was going on, or ask you if there was damage? Work with you in any way, like that?

Resident: They came here and done a pre-blast survey on my house. I called 'em, had to do that. They haven't been back since then. But I can't, I can't say that they damaged my house, other than the dust, you know, but they damaged my water.

Interviewer: Did you ever ask to have regular samples taken from the water or anything like that?

Resident: Well ah, that man that came here he took samples of my water.

Interviewer: The man that came here?

Resident: And the environmentalist that came and done the pre-blast, he took samples of my water, my water wasn't that bad when they done that.

Interviewer: Right.

Resident: Just got worst after that, they did come back two days more, By the third coming, took two samples. He said now you put water in here, and now he was mad then.

Resident II: And we haven't heard from him.

Resident: Yeah, and that ain't been to long.

Interviewer: And who do you think he worked for?

Resident: He worked for some contractor now didn't he?

Interviewer: So he was...

Resident: But he was something to do with the state now, but I don't know what it was.

Resident II: They ran a waterline from Madison, I don't know were it started at...

Resident: Elk River from what I understood, the waterline that comes through Sharples to Clothier and the Boone County line.

Resident II: And the people is hooking up on that waterline, but it didn't come through Sharples.

Resident: Well, Sharples already had a water system.

Resident II: I don't know how far up the road they did come.

Resident: They came to the Clothier line, the Boone County line.

Resident II: He may have been passing out information, because of that, I don't know.

Resident: See this... this use to be a big community, I mean there was probably about 300 hundred families that owned their home. Now I bet there's 65 that own their homes. There's a few more that the company has rented their houses out they bought, but there's about 65 families that own their property. And they'd like to buy all us out but we don't wanna sell.

Interviewer: When did that shift happen? When did it go from 300 to 65?

Resident: Well, a probably when they started buying they wasn't quite 300. They was probably... I think they said they was gonna buy 200 and some houses when they first started buying. And that way they included everybody. See it had already dropped down some then, but ah... I've got a picture if you'd like to see of Blair back in 1927. That's was before they even started this strip mining, that was back when it was a mining community.

Interviewer: Underground mining and that who people worked for, underground mining company?

Resident: Yeah, but you can see what kind of community it was then. It was a big community.

Interviewer: When the surface mining came in, in your experience did a lot of people go to work for them, from Blair and Sharples area?

Resident: Not from Blair, no.

Interviewer: No?

Resident: A whole lot of them came here from other places. Lot of 'em bringing in contractors and I was already working there then.

Interviewer: Was um... you talked a lot about some of the physical, environmental changes when the mining started, was there changes to the community like the schools were impacted or things of that nature?

Resident: We don't have no schools. These days, when they buy these out, the kids leave. And we didn't have no kids, so they closed the schools down. And they, what kids you have now, some of them I think goes Madison, some to Chapmanville. My baby girl graduated from Chapmanville, what, she go there two years?

Resident II: One year.

Resident: In her last year at Chapmanville.

Resident II: Madison? Something...

Resident: That was about the only thing that the communities like Sharples, Clothier and Blair had that we got together on. Was the schools, you know. And ah, so they got them closed down and ah we had no communication now what so ever with other communities.

Resident II: When you loose your schools in a community, you have no reason to have a community.

Resident: There was at one time we had five grocery stores. We had three service stations, now we don't have... All we got in businesses is a barber shop and a post office. That's all we got. We want to buy a loaf of bread we got to drive to Boone County line, or to Logan.

Interviewer: So the businesses are gone. Tell me a little bit more also about what you meant by when the school was closed down, the community....how did you phrase it... doesn't have a reason?

Resident II: The community is no community anymore. Children is what makes families. And if children ain't around in the community, they're going somewhere else. Then the family don't have no reason to get together for any reason. Families... in this community, in Sharples, when the children done something, mommies and daddies was there. When they played ball mommies and daddies was there. When they had Halloween parties, mommies and daddies was there. When they had any kind of a get together, mommies and daddies was there. They had mothers to do... mothers got together to do things with the children. We don't have that no more!

Resident: We, we live in an isolated area.

Resident II: Yeah.

Resident: From the top of Blair mountain, the Logan County politicians wait's 'till Boone County's election time. We can't get much from Logan until election time, then we get a little bit. And ah, from Boone County, see on up this way from Clothier that's Boone County out that way, so we don't get anything from Boone County. We tried to secede to Boone County, but it didn't go through. But ah, we have always been treated as red headed stepchild (ha ha), but ah the politicians has never done anything for us *until* election time. They come over and pat you on the back, and the people they give a little money go. And all the people they'll get out and campaign for 'em.

Resident II: There was Board of Education members that we had voted for because they had it exed on the ballot that they wouldn't vote for it – “We will not close, vote to close your schools.”

Resident: They was considering to drive... that they had to take the kids the whole way to the Chapmanville. And they was considered going across Blair mountain, but they said they wouldn't

go that way. But ah they did say they would never vote to close the school down, but when it come time to vote they voted and did it.

Resident II: They told us a bare face lie.

Resident: The pressure was probably put on from the State, you know, the State come in here and took over ah the board

Resident II: I'm the type of person that if I give somebody my word, I'm gonna stick to my word.

Resident: Well, he's a politician though you know politicians like to lie (ha ha). They don't like to, but they do (ha ha).

Resident II: I couldn't do that. I'm not that kind of person. "Specific name" was one of them.

Interviewer: Where there other community resources that closed down, ah churches? You said the post office is still here.

Resident: Yeah, and what did you want to know?

Interviewer: Churches, were there any churches, or libraries or any public...

Resident: No, there wasn't no library. I don't think any churches are closed yet but some of them don't meet very often.

Resident II: The Blair, the Baptist down here.

Resident: They met Sunday.

Resident II: Did they?

Resident: Yeah, they don't meet very often. But they have but about six members.

Resident II: Our property...

Resident: We came down here Church of Christ and we have ah 18 members. And ah, we use to have about 43. A lot of them have moved away, and some of them passed away. And you don't have much to work with, 'cause we're so small. But were surviving

Resident II: That land that the church property is on is on loan from the coal company. We need that.

Resident: Well, the deal was as long as they didn't need the property we could use it. That was the deed or the lease or whatever they got from them. But if they ever decide they want it, they give us a 90 day notice and we gotta move the structure. But we couldn't move it.

Interviewer: So, you'd lose the church if they decided they wanted it that land...

Resident: Right.

Interviewer: What is the community like here now with the homes and the families that are left?

Resident II: It's not the same community.

Resident: Well, I can't say it's a bad community, but there's just not many of us.

Resident II: So few of us left.

Resident: There's nothing to get us together. I mean you take you got the four churches here in Blair, and they don't never associate with one another. So, we don't get together for that reason, so there's nothing like school or anything like that to get us together. Every now and then somebody will have a baby shower or household shower or something and some of the women will get together... (The phone rings, Resident is speaking to someone on the phone)

Pause in tape.

Interviewer: Ah lets see, where were we???

Resident: You asked about the community I believe... Our community is ah it's small, but everybody just about knows everybody. We got a few people here in Blair, that we don't get acquainted with yet, that moved into company houses, not lived here very long. And ah, but the ones that's lived here along time, all of them are mostly good people. And ah were just not as big as we use to be. And we don't have anything to get us together, you know, like a community gathering. Every Memorial Day, they have a memorial get together, ah that's about the only time that the community... The people come here, you know, that's moved away for that, and that's about the only thing we had to get together on. Or unless it's a wake or something, somebody died. That's what wakes are, they're just reunions. (ha, ha)

Interviewer: Of the people who still live down here, are there some family? Is... how would you describe sort of the future of this community?

Resident: I believe it will finally vanish. It won't be any, if the coal company has anything to do with it. See they're wanting to go underneath us and get coal, they want the long wall. I don't know if you know anything about long wall mining or not... you know what happens when they long wall? Well they want to get us out of here, because if our property sinks, they know we're gonna sue. 'Course it's hard to get anything out of 'em. But ah they'll eventually, I'd say, get us all.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about how the company approached the community from your experience about buying out, you said 200 some homes?

Resident: The way I understood it, is the people called them. They was thinking they was getting a big price you know, for their property. Well let me give you an example: Man brought a piece

of property right down here, below this house right there, he paid \$18,000 for that piece of property, and it was an old house. The coal company, ah he called them, and they made him a deal - give him \$24,000. So he said, "I'm making \$6,000." Well my brother told him, he said "Well you go buy you a place for \$24,000." And he went and moved over round Madison or somewhere over in there. He come back and told my brother, he said, "Well," he said, "You was right, you can't find nothing for that price." So you see he didn't help his self any, that's what happens to a lot of them. They're think there getting, you know a good price until they go try to buy something.

Interviewer: And you think they approached the company, to buy out because...

Resident: Most of them did. Now some of them, maybe the company might of came to them but ah, most of them would call the company and make a deal with the company.

Interviewer: And you think that was because they didn't want to live with the impact that was going on?

Resident: That's was part of it. They didn't want to live with the problems that was gonna be caused. They wanted to get out.

Interviewer: And the other part?

Resident: Oh, the other part... They thought they was getting a good deal for their property and they didn't pay that much for it. Thought he was making a profit just like that fella, he thought he was making a profit until he went to buy something some where else, and found out he, he wasn't getting a good deal. And another thing too, the people, other people would sell for and get a bigger price than what he did, and he'd hear about it, and it'd make you feel bad.

Interviewer: So did that cause tensions in the community?

Resident: Well, not between the community, but it did between who sold out to the company. They'd get mad because they didn't get as much as somebody else got.

Interviewer: So they're mad at the company and not their neighbors.

Resident: Right, right. I don't think there was any problem between the community, as far as people selling out. I hate to see them go, but that was their choice.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about your decision not to move?

Resident: Well I didn't want to! I like this place, and I was born and raised here. I'm not saying I won't go. It may get so bad I might have to, but I don't want to. I don't believe I'd be satisfied anywhere else. I've looked around, looked at property and it's outrageous. I said if I had to go, I said they're gonna buy me a place. I'm not gonna go in debt. This is paid for - I don't owe a dime on it. I own this place and that place up there, those hills. If I go somewhere, they gonna buy me a place. I'm not gonna go in debt. So I don't know. I'm not gonna say I won't go, but I don't want to.

Interviewer: Have you had any interactions with someone from the company or an agent, about that possibility?

Resident: Selling out?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Resident: No, now they came in here... We own 27 acres of this hillside here. And the coal company, ah sold the timber, and they told them that they owned all the way down here behind our house. And the reason they done that there, was a the man that lives up the holler, my dad sold some property to. And he kept 27 acres, but that lawyer, their lawyer up the holler here corrected the deed. They done correct the deed and gave him 27 acres of our property. So, we didn't know nothing about that. So when the coal company come in here, or the logging company, they got to cutting our timber. And we got out there and told them they was cutting our timber. And they said no, he said, that belongs to the coal company, so we got into a lawsuit with the coal company over them cutting our timber, you know. And they finally realized that they had made a mistake so we got \$15,000 for the timber they cut. We could have got more if we would of went to court, but it would of took years. So, we decided to settle out of court for \$15,000. And they also made a property line, surveyed it made a property line, where our line is. But that's the only deal, the only problem that we had, with the coal company as far as them trying to take our property, or anything.

Interviewer: Have they never approached you about purchasing that 27 acres that you know?

Resident: No, no. They never, they never come to us ask us about selling out or anything. I guess they know we don't want to sell. We let it known to the community that we don't want to sell. See my brother lives there, and I live here, and my sister lives... I own this up here and she lives in that one. And ah Daddy left us, every one, a piece of property. My son and my sister lives up here. She had a piece property and above that, and she deed that to my son. And he owns it now. Then another one of my sisters owns a piece of property right above the home place here, but she sold hers. It's been sold three or four times, and finally they sold to the coal company. And ah, so we own this property and these heir ships. The hillside is heir ship, and we just don't want to sell. Don't want to go.

Interviewer: So you enjoy living here and, and the ties to the land that your family has? Is that why?

Resident: Right, right, it's not... it's a good community, I lived here all my live, I can't imagine living somewhere else, I might have to one of these day, I don't know.

Interviewer: Did you have any other ah, interactions with the company, or, or an agent of the company about what kind of mining they were going to be doing, or before they came in?

Resident: They don't tell you anything. That's one problem the community has, is they don't never let the community know what there going to do. See if they'd come in here and told, you know, what there going to do, there might have been more people that would have sold out. I don't know.

But they *still* haven't told nobody what there going to do. But we understand, and know that there going to go underneath us. They got two seams of coal down there, that they're wanting to get and they want to long wall. See, they're already coming this way, from over Danville, well actually Dehue and that way. And if Sharples gets back open back up _____ they're going to come this way. They're going to get all this coal underneath.

Interviewer: So you've got one on the other side of you?

Resident: Well this ones not operating now, but that one over yonder is. That one over yonder is Massey and this is Arch. I don't know if I would want to buy it with all that coal and all that water Kelly's got in it. Westmoreland, Sharples, they went in to Cedar Grove, and flooded it out. Caused an explosion.

Interviewer: Those are underground minds that are flooded out?

Resident: Right. Up here, up Kelly holler here, where that mine use to be up there, see they came in from Amhurst. That all collects together back to Amhurst and the water runs out of the ground at the side of the holler up here just comes right up out the ground, from the pressure. And all that mine is filled with water. You got Westmoreland, then over this way, that comes back in towards us all that full of water. Then Sharples, go down beneath that, I'd been scared death to go in there. That water breaks through – you ain't got a chance.

Interviewer: Did you ever see information printed about what kind of permit activity or anything like that?

Resident: They put the permit's that they applied for, and they permit... when they get them in the paper. But most people don't understand those permit's, you know, where it is at or anything like that. They just see a map in there and they don't even no where it's at.

Resident II: We have at Orange Cove was suppose to have gotten a permit, for Sharples now. And if they did and when they do, they'll go across the road toward Dehue.

Resident: That's the big permit that they've had trouble over, she's takin about... Going across through... Pigeonroost, White Oak and all up through yonder. I've heard that they got part of that, but they ain't got it all now.

Interviewer: So none of that is something that you read about... or permit in the paper, that's just what you've heard through the community?

Resident II: From other sources, people in the community talk about....

Resident: You'll hear every now and then, they're going to start back up about two weeks down here. But they ain't started up yet.

Female Interviewer: Did they put the ah, permit information that's in the paper, is it in the local paper?

Resident: Yeah, the Logan Banner.

Interviewer: Logan Banner.

Interviewer: And is it... do people not understand it because it's... the way they talk about it or the maps not legible, or they are?

Resident: Some of them just don't know how to read that map.

Interviewer: Okay.

Resident: It's written down. Well the permit's are written down, but people still don't understand where they're at.

Interviewer: The maps are clear, they just don't necessarily know what they mean.

Resident: Right. Now the ones that understand it are the ones that fight against it. 'Cause they know where it's at. But ah, it's hard to fight against the coal company, and win.

Resident II: Down in West Virginia the coal company has the power. In West Virginia, the coal company is the power.

Resident: The coal is king as they say, in West Virginia.

Resident II: And the little man don't have a chance. They decide they want a piece of property their gonna get it.

Resident: Where do you live?

Female Interviewer: We're from the Philadelphia area.

Resident: Philadelphia... they mine up there too don't they?

Female Interviewer: They definitely do some mining in central Pennsylvania.

Resident: Are they mountaintopping?

Interviewer: Not much mountaintop...

Interviewer II: They use to do a lot of deep mining, but that's pretty much done.

Resident II: That's what they did here for years and years, and years is deep mining.

Resident: West Virginia, they found out it's a lot cheaper to start at the top and take the mountain down to the coal. 'Cause they get three inches of coal, if they grind into three inches of coal, they

get that too. They don't waste anything but that don't care what there doing to the environment. They just throw it over the hill and fill up a holler. We got a holler up here that use that be fork up here, one holler to the right, and one to the left, and they filled the one to the right so full it ain't no holler there no more.

Resident II: When they take the hilltop off to get the coal, they don't need as many workers either...

Resident: No, it takes less men...

Resident II: So that puts men out of work. And that all most people here was doing, knows, was coal mining, in these small communities.

Resident: You all come across Blair Mountain?

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Resident II: Did you all see some garbage over there?

Interviewer: I did, along side of the road.

Resident: Yeah.

Resident II: That's another problem we have.

Resident: I don't know why the, you talk about you're an environmentalist, why can't you stop and look at that and see if you can find a name in it? I thought about doing it but hell, I said if I do somebody come along catch me and think I was gonna put it out. They'll fine me.

Resident II: When this started out here in all the houses up this holler was gone except for "Specific name" and then ours, people come up here and put garbage up our holler.

Resident: Yep, the magazine up there had their name on it. The fella that lives above me up here, he called 'em, and he told'em he done it. And he brought his garbage up there and dumped it out.

Resident II: They had come to the conclusion that ain't nobody around here, so why don't we make a garbage dump out of this place.

Resident: That's what there gonna do bring out... look like they just bring there garbage. They ought at least throw it over the hill, where people can't see it. They just throw it out the side of the road.

Interviewer: And that's people who don't want to pay, or, or maybe can't pay, don't wanna pay for someone to come take it away?

Resident: I don't know what it is.

Resident II: If I couldn't afford to pay, I would take it to the town and put it in the garbage bin somewhere in the town.

Interviewer: Ah huh.

Resident II: I mean, that's better then throwing it side the road. 'Cause we had one down here at the mouth of holler, and other people had put their stuff in our bin.

Resident: I'll tell you what, they done to us one time... We ah, they found a piece of paper on Blair Mountain where it had her name on it, and they called her and was gonna want her to bring it where she pays for garbage. And she called them and told them, she said, "Now listen...I don't like to see this littering, and I don't litter." She said, "Now that might of blown out of my car, I don't know." But they was wanting to fine us, just because they found a piece of paper. Now you look at the garbage long the road and they don't do a thing about that.

Resident II: I put ah, we have plastic bags in our car, and we put our garbage in the plastic bag in our car.

Resident: Yeah, we put garbage bags in the car.

Resident II: So, that just the messing the road up and the territory up.

Resident: The scenery, I hate to see that garbage along the road.

Interviewer: Well like you said, that their bringing it in here where you live too, 'cause they think no one lives there.

Resident II: He's got a nephew that lives up Kelley... tell um that story.

Resident: Yeah, there was a fella, he was a contractor from over on the Man side, Buffalo Creek side, somewhere, and they worked on somebody's roof. And the old shingles that they took off, they brought them up the holler up here, and dumped them. And my nephew and his wife, they found out he done it, and they called...

Resident II: They found a piece of paper where they...

Resident: Yeah, ...paid for the stuff that they had worked with. So, they called 'em, and they found out through that who done it. And they called this fella and told him that they'd give him 24 hours to come and clean that up or they were gonna call, whoever they call and ask them to come over right a way. And he said, "I paid my brother to do this job, and I paid him to haul that to a garbage dump." And he said, "He brought it up there." So, he got another one of my nephews had a little ole end loader, and he hired him to load it up. And they hauled it off. But that's the way they do. It's ridiculous. You know, must garbage trucks will pick up about any garbage they pick up old washing machines, things like that. But about all people just haul off and throw 'em upside the road somewhere.

Resident II: It's really not that much. Is it \$24 for a month for a large one?

Resident: For what?

Resident II: Like for our garbage thing down here? We paid how much?

Resident: About \$12.

Resident II: \$12, for a month. That ain't bad. And there's three of us that put our garbage in there.

Resident: There is more than than....

Resident II: Yeah, I know there are. I know.

Resident: Yeah... they're not supposed to... I've never caught any body, but I know there is people who do it.

Interviewer: What about the homes that were bought-out, what happen to them, where they?

Resident: They were tore down,

Resident II: Torn down.

Resident: Most of them, now if there's a real nice home I don't know where you noticed the one, you come off Blair mountain? They bought that one, and that's a nice one - haven't been built to long. And they kept that one. And there's a few more like that, that's kinda new. And they kept 'em and rented. They just cost you about \$100 a month to rent. That's a pretty good price for rent. Some of them may be a little more, I don't know, but they said were those that way they rented them out instead of tearing them down.

Resident II: That was another thing we had round here, there was homes burning.... They just leave it a mess.

Resident: A mess.

Interviewer: They didn't haul the refuge?

Resident: Well, they didn't until the people got to complaining about it, and then uh the environmental Protection Agency, I guess, came in and got on the coal company, made 'em clean it up. But uh, it wouldn't be long after somebody moved out of one - it burned. We always figured the coal company hired somebody to set it on fire, to get rid of it probably. Cheaper to burn them than it was to tear 'em down.

Interviewer: Well, I think that pretty much covers all the questions that I wanted to ask you. Uh,

did we talk about the, in terms of the coal mining industry being here in the holler, where there any benefit's that you saw? I know you said a few people were hired by the company to work there, uh were there any other benefit's?

Resident: Well, they paid good wages to the ones who worked there. Uh coal is a good occupation. It's kinda dangerous, but uh, it pays good wages, got good benefit's, if you could get a job. I tried to get a job down Sharples for ah, probably about 12 years, before I even got on down there. One fella told me, he said, "You the next fella I'm gonna hire." He lost his job, pretty good while after, he lost his job, and I didn't get the job. But there's a boy I was raised with, his brother-in-law got to be Superintendent, and we had little league baseball, and I was manager of the little league team. And he ask me, he said "Specific name, say, why don't you get a job in the coal mining?" I said, "Man, they wont hire me." So he talked to his brother-in-law, and his brother-in-law said, "You want work?" I said, "Well give me a job and see," and they gave me a job, that way - little league baseball. And I worked 27 years for them. But it's hard to get on, you gotta have somebody to pull for you. Just take somebody in the community, that's got nobody that works there, or you don't know anybody, you just can't get on. It's kinda like a family thing.

Interviewer: So you think there are jobs there, but their hiring from other places?

Resident: Oh yeah, they'd rather hire strangers than hire someone from the community.

Resident II: We know they do... was my son, that could have got hired for a job and These others got the job.

Resident: Well, what it was, they got to hiring these young boys, and 'sow and plow' - hire them to cut weeds or something like that. And if they liked them, they'd move them up, but if they didn't like them, they'd get rid of them. Well, my son, I got him a job, cutting weeds. He moved up into the warehouse, and this is still a salaried job. And two of the boss's, boys was hired after my son, and they moved them up into the union. My son he got so aggravated, he just quit. And I told him, I said "Son, you gotta be patient."

Resident II: They was the same age. One was born in February, and was born I believe in October, they was the same age. And that had *nothing* to do with it - his daddy was the boss.

Resident: It was a family thing, you know, you was in the family or in the click, you could get on, or get your son on. I had a time getting my boy a job. I went to the 'main man', and talked to him about it, and it wasn't long after I talked to him, he hired my son.

Interviewer: So, other than a few jobs, well paying jobs, would you say there are other benefit's? Did, did they improve any of the roads, or, or improve any other community things?

Resident: The State Roads, State keeps the roads up for the coal companies. I mean, if you got a coal company that's paying big taxes, State Roads will keep the roads up. It's like this Kelly holler here now, that use to be past on all the way cross over to Amerstdale. And after the coal company went out up here, it's asphalted up to where the tipple was and then it's dirt from there own up to the foot of the mountain, and there across is asphalted. But that was back in the early '60s that that

was asphalted? That was when this coal company up the holler was a big business. See it's out of business now, so they don't care. The State Roads ain't gonna fix it. It's still a State highway though.

Interviewer: So, the surface mining just, uh, help me remember, here on one side it's still going on and one side it might, it might be starting up again.

Resident: Oh, they're gonna start back up. I don't know when.

Interviewer: And you said it started around middle 90s?

Resident: The mountaintopping, right.

Interviewer: Yeah...

Resident: Yeah, now this coal mine down here been down for oh, back in the probably the turn of century. But they deep mined back then, and...

Resident II: We *know* they were gonna start back up because the old... what is that thing down there...

Resident: The dragline.

Resident II: ...the dragline is still there. If they wasn't gonna start back up they would have moved the dragline and put it somewhere else.

Resident: Now they started stripping back in the '70s, but the mountaintopping they didn't start to the mid '90s. The stripping, you know, I guess you know about the stripping.

Interviewer: Yeah

Resident: It's bad enough, but then the mountaintopping just take it all. If you go... where you going when you leave here?

Interviewer: Where gonna go the other way out, where gonna go up...

Resident: Down Charleston? Madison?

Interviewer: Madison, right.

Resident: When you go down the road here, you kinda watch down this side the top of the mountain and you can see the mountains been cut out about half way. And a lot of places just got grass, they ain't got no trees down so far. When you get down at the bottom there's trees, but they sewed grass, and I don't think grass is as good as trees (laugh).

Resident II: Another thing, I don't know if you all have anything to do with trees, or well I guess

you do. When people come in here to cut trees down, they take what they like...

Interviewer II: Yeah, select.

Resident II: ...and they leave what they don't like. And they don't clean it up, they don't, they pull in take what they like and leave. They leave *terrible* mess and we live with it!

Resident: When we had that meeting down at the school about, with the environmentalist, I ask that fella, I asked him what they protecting. He told me you know, the streams, and stuff like that. I said, "Well. I'll tell you what I said, suppose you caught me cutting trees down in the creek, and just leaving them there." I said, "What would you do?" He said "I'd tell you to get 'em out." "Well," I said, "up the holler where I live, I said they cut these trees down and left the tops of the trees right in the creek." And I said, "When it floods, you know what's gonna happen!" And he said, "Well," and he said, "there ain't no laws against the timber company." That's what he told me. And he could've made the coal company... who would've been responsible, I ask him, "I said if this comes down the holler and damage my property, who am I gonna sue?" He said, "Well, it would be the coal company, being liable." I said, "Why can't they come down there and just pull them trees tops up out of the creek?" I said, "They can do that real easy." But, they never did.

Interviewer: Well is there anything that I didn't ask you about, that you wanted to talk to us about?

Resident: I'm gonna show you that picture.

Interviewer: Yeah, I'd like to see that picture.